

# **FUNDAMENTALISM OR TERRORISM:**

## **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA'S BOKO HARAM**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The contemporary Nigerian state has since 2009, been a theater of a deadly insurgency that poses threats, its legitimacy, territorial integrity, social and political stability. The insurgency is orchestrated by a group that calls itself the *Jama'atu Ahl'is Sunnah Li Da'awati Wal Jihad*, popularly called Boko Haram. The group has been claiming the establishment of an Islamic state out of Nigeria as the objective of its insurgency. Since it came into being, Boko Haram has suffered from a crisis of identity. While on the one hand, some analysts have characterized the group as an Islamic fundamentalist movement, on the other, Boko Haram is considered as a terrorist organization. The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze the nature, character and methodology employed by Boko Haram with the objective of determining whether it is an Islamic fundamentalist or a terrorist group or both. Using the failed state thesis complimented by the rules of engagement for declaring or executing a *Jihad* (Holy War) as enshrined in the Qur'an and Practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), this paper argues that Boko Haram is anything but an Islamic Fundamentalist group as its activities negate the basic tenets of the Islamic faith. The view of this paper is that the solution to the Boko Haram insurgency lies not only on the use of military solution alone but, in the long run, the capacity of the Nigerian state to satisfy the material needs of its people.

**Keywords:** Fundamentalism, Terrorism, insurgency, Islamic State.

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Nigerian State has, since 2009, been the theatre of a deadly armed insurgency that has, according to estimates, claimed over 20,000 lives of innocent civilians, insurgents and the security operatives dispatched by the Nigerian Government and its neighbours to combat it.

The insurgency was spearheaded by a group that calls itself the *Jama'atu Ahiul Sunnah Ii Da'awati Wa! Jihad*, but popularly called Boko Haram, a name derived from its abhorrence of western education which it describes as sinful. Since it broke out in 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency has not only claimed thousands of lives but ignited a humanitarian crisis as reflected in the social dislocation it has caused by rendering millions of people homeless most of who are now classified as internally displaced persons (Yau 2014) and the economic destruction it has precipitated in the North East region of Nigeria and beyond.

Since its rise, Boko Haram has tended to characterize itself as an Islamic movement with the objective of initiating a revolutionary process of change from the secular status quo in Nigeria and replacing it with a political system based on Sharia i.e. Islamic legal jurisprudence. In practical terms, this translates into the transformation of Nigeria, or at least its Northern part into an Islamic state, a goal that has been disputed by scholars, both Muslim and secular. Indeed, since it rise in the Nigerian Political and religious landscape, Boko Haram has faced a crisis of identity leading to divergent characterizations ranging from being an Islamic fundamentalist movement to either a political or worse still, a terrorist organization motivated by sheer

criminality. As Alozieuwa (2013) argued, one of the outcomes of the Boko Haram insurgency has been the preponderance of theories that attempt to explain the motives and objectives of the group. Unlike the militancy of youths in the Niger Delta which has been rationalized on the basis of the alleged marginalization in the sharing of revenue from crude oil exploited from there, Boko Haram has done little to articulate its grievances beyond its assumed goal of enforcing the strict interpretation of Islamic Law. The controversy surrounding the group was further compounded by changing dynamics of the group's operations which initially targeted security operatives of the state but later extended to civilians, non-governmental targets and the general public.

This confusion as it relates to the correct identity and character of Boko Haram has given rise to a plethora of theories some of which aligns the rise and activities of the group to internal factors such as socio-economic and political factors including the extra — judicial murder of its leader, Muhammad Yusuf while other theories attribute the origins of the group to external factors which range from their being part of a global Islamic Jihadist Movements to what some analysts claim to be a calculated attempt to destabilize or even cause the disintegration of the Nigerian State. A case in point lies in the origins of the group. While for instance Adibe (2012) as cited in Alozieuwa (2013) subscribes to the idea that the group emerged in 2001 or 2002 as is popularly believed, other scholars trace the origin of the group to as far back as 1995. The controversy transcends the issue of exact date of the emergence of the group and extends to its founding fathers or leaders. On the one hand are studies that ascribe the leadership of the group to Muhammad Yusuf, others attribute the group's leadership to one Abubakar who later left for further studies in Madinah (Saudi Arabia) and

was succeeded by Muhammad Yusuf (Madike 2011, Adibe 2012:50, Uzodike and Mai angwa 2012:100) as cited in Alazieuwa (2013:2), “The obscurity surrounding its true origin perhaps informs why initially the sect had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local populace” (Okereke 201:450 as cited in Alozieuwa 2013). Thus the local populace called them names such as Taliban, Yusufiyya or even Al-Shabab. Whatever the case, the group formally identified itself first as *Ahiulsunna Wa! Jama’ah Hifra* and later, *Jama’atul Ahiul Sunnah Li’da’awati wal jihad*.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Literary works on social conflict in general and politically motivated violence by religious groups in particular are many but the consensus among scholars tend to suggest that the factors responsible for these are deeply rooted in the nature of specific societies in which these conflicts prevail. The phenomena of Nigeria’s boko Haram insurgency is not an exception. Thus, there are suggestions that the issue of militant social and political protests is deeply rooted in the nature of the state in Africa especially in the context of perceived state failure in governance and the capacity to address the fundamental social, economic and political problems facing the citizenry. This state failure has given rise to groups, ethnic and religious militia which arose in contestation with the state either as a consequence of the manner in which the affairs of state are being managed or as a reaction to perceived marginalization in the sharing of social wealth among the various and mostly heterogeneous social forces that constitute the state. (Eds Mohammed 201 2:213). “In several ways, the (armed) groups are specific responses to the multiple and deep crises of the state to the

challenges of development, democratization and governance in Africa (Eds. Muhammed 2012:213).

On the resurgent militancy by Islamist groups such as Boko Haram, Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaida, Alshabbab, ISIL etc in general, it has also been suggested that they reflected a growing tendency among such groups to engage in struggles aimed at Islamic revivalism and, on a wide scale, the agitation for radical transformation of the mostly secular modern state system to an Islamic polity. Sayyid A'ala Maudid (ed Khuran 1984) had advanced the thesis that the main motivation or objectives of Islamic movements is effecting a revolution in leadership which according to him, has rebelled against God and is responsible for the suffering of Mankind and the corruption and immorality that has befallen human society. Thus, in line with this thesis, the emergence of the Boko Haram phenomena has been explained in the context of the submission that: 'Dissident Islamists are a significant force in countries such as Nigeria where there is a ready social foundation, deep inequities and failure of Governance' (eds Mohammed). Accordingly it has further been argued that in predominantly Muslim communities, socio-economic and political grievances often find expression in various ways such as open and insurgent challenges to the prevailing social order in their societies. The failed state thesis as an explanation to the deepening crises and conflicts in Nigeria has been advanced by scholars as source of conflict and crisis in Nigeria. (Kinnan et al 2011:9). State failure has been defined in terms of states that suffer from the potential loss of control of its territory and its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, erosion of its legitimate authority to make collective decisions and its inability to provide reasonable public services to its

citizens, among other factors. Nigeria, a country endowed with immense crude oil resources, agricultural potential with the largest population in Africa and one of the 20 advanced economies of the world has, however, been ranked 17th most likely state to fail on the list of 148 countries studied for the 2007 failed state index. (Kinnan et al 200:9)

The idea here is that failed states have the potential of posing danger not only to themselves but also to their neighbours and in the current globalized world, such dangers could extend to the world economy and the strategic interests of other nations. (Eds Kinnan et al 2011:9). Precisely, therefore, the failed state thesis has been gaining ground as a theoretical Framework for explaining the wave of ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria in general and the rise of militant groups such as Boko Haram, Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Odu'a People Congress (OPC) and similar groups in general. The failed state thesis is however not the only theoretical framework adopted by scholars to explain social conflicts in Nigeria, particularly the Boko Haram phenomena. Aniforose (Ed. Babawale 2003:45) stated that a number of theoretical explanations have been advanced by scholars aimed at establishing a paradigm for understanding the source of conflicts in Nigeria. These could be grouped into three broad but complementary models made up of the psychological frustration aggression models, relative deprivation hypothesis, systemic and group conflict hypothesis. These models are not entirely mutually exclusive to the state failure thesis as they reflect the various dimensions in which state and community or group relations constitute a basis for conflict. In other words, these models are deeply rooted in the society whether in terms of arising out of failure to attain group desires and

demands, group alienation in the sharing of societal wealth or violence arising out of struggle for power. Agbaje's (ed. Babawale 2003:1) position on the authoritarian character of the Nigerian state as a factor that has reduced politics to a desperate struggle for privileged access to the state as a cause of group conflict and violence also falls within the context of the nature of the state as a contributor in this regard. Tijjani's thesis built on the premise of introduction of western (Christian) education in the predominantly Muslim communities of Northern Nigeria as a factor in the rise of organizations such as Boko Haram is also relevant towards explaining the insurgency and violence perpetrated by the group. The idea here is that the colonial (western) education system introduced in Northern Nigeria is partly, if not largely responsible for giving rise to a system of group differentiation, animosity and disdain for Western educated people by the traditionally (Islamic) educated northerners. This animosity and antagonism arose out of perception by the latter group that the western education system has provided undue advantage to the western educated elites thereby enhancing their opportunities for social, economic and political mobility over and above their Islamic educated counterparts in the north. This, according to Tijjani (2014:12) established the basis for the animosity and antagonism between western and Islamic educated Northern Nigerians hence the rise of Boko Haram, presumably to seek redress to the perceived imbalances. The anti-western education ideology of Boko Haram, thus, may have stemmed out of the desire to curtail the advantages enjoyed by the western educated, a goal that is achievable through the establishment of an Islamic state that will give prominence to Islamic education as opposed to Western education. (ed Perome de Monteclos 2014:13).



Studies aimed at explaining the correct character, identity or goals of Boko Haram cannot, however, be limited to secular or non-religious theoretical frameworks. Given the stated objectives of Boko Haram, namely, the establishment of an Islamic State by way of the execution of *Jihad* (holy war), there is the need to compare and contrast the groups ideology, methods and operations with the rules of such engagements as spelt out by Islamic literature. The Quran and Hadith (sayings and deeds of the prophet SAW) contain explicit explanations on how an Islamic movement should go about executing a *Jihad* where one is necessary. The *Qur'an* and *Hadith* both of which have enjoined Muslims to wage a Jihad have also established a code of conduct which all *Jihadists* are expected to adhere to. Islam has expressly forbidden any action that could be described as aggression or terrorist especially against women, children, the aged and innocent. Works and statements by numerous Muslim scholars like Sheikh Ja'afar Adam, Sheikh Muhammad Albani, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, to mention but a few, have expressed reservations about the Islamic character of Boko Haram on issues of ideology and methodology. Thus any study aimed at determining the true character and identity of the group must necessarily be made in the context of the compatibility of Boko Haram ideology and methods to what the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* say about actions purported to be Jihad. The point being made here is that this study will be conducted on the basis of multiple theoretical frameworks derived from secular literature as well as from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* for the purpose of establishing the Islamism or lack of it in the ideology and methodology of Boko Haram.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

To facilitate the adequate comprehension of issues discussed in this paper, some key concepts require to be operationally defined. Among these concepts is fundamentalism. The term has its origins in the United States of America where a Christian protestant movement rose with the main objective of converting what the group defined as the “Madness” of liberal tendencies prevailing in their country (Moten 1996: 127). Despite its Christian origins, however, fundamentalism has in recent times been used to describe Muslim groups aiming at the establishment of a political order which recognizes the sharia as its source of law.

Seen in this context, Islamic groups agitating for the strict devotion to the fundamentals of Islam including those yearning for the establishment of an Islamic political order are being described as fundamentalists. Another concept that needs to be clarified is that of terrorism. Like the term fundamentalism, terrorism is also a controversial concept given the variety of ways in which different people perceive it.

Like the concept fundamentalism, terrorism has in recent times been associated with Muslims despite its origins from the Christian world. Defining terrorism is not easy given its subjective character. As, some scholars observed a terrorist is one place could be freedom fighter in another. Its definitional ambiguities notwithstanding, terrorism may be perceived of as violent physical attacks or threat of doing so against targets aimed at influencing political decisions (Albert et al 2012:283) or as defined by the United State of America (USA) state Department as, “premeditated, politically motivated act of violence perpetrated against non combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience. Terrorism has further been defined as a calculated use of violence or threat of violence for the

attainment of goals that may be political, economic, religious or ideological. Its various definitions notwithstanding, a major character of terrorism is violence or the threat of its use for the achievement of diverse goals. Terrorism is executed through many methods including murder, kidnapping, suicide or car bombings, hijacking or aircrafts, arsons armed attacks on soft targets such as places of worship, schools, markets etc and hostage taking. (Albert et al 2012:284).

Terrorism may be sponsored by individuals or non state actors as well as by the state as demonstrated by the activities of American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Russian Bureau of State Security (KGB), MOSSAD of Israel or even Nigeria's Department of State Security (DSS).

As mentioned earlier, though terrorism owes its origins to the Christian world, it has come to be associated with groups calling themselves Jihadist or Islamic movement such as Osama bn Laden's Al Qaida, Egypt's Muslim brotherhood, Lebanon's Hizbollah, Somalia's Al-Shabab and Nigeria's Boko Haram.

The concept of Jihad has also been a source of controversy among scholars both Muslims and secular. Jihad has come to be accepted as a duty thrust upon all Muslims, both at the individual and collective level to struggle against all forms of evil, corruption, injustice, tyranny and oppression, whether this injustice is committed against Muslims or non-Muslims and whether by Muslims or non-Muslims. In this context Jihad may include peaceful struggle or if necessary, armed struggle. (Da'awah Institute Nigeria 2009). Jihad, in its broader sense connotes a struggle in Allah's cause. The Da'awah Institute explored the various dimensions of the meanings ascribed to

the concept as perceived by the prophet (S.A.W) and his companions (May Allah be pleased with them) such as the exertion or efforts by an individual against his self and his own desires for the sake of Allah (SWT), speaking the words of truth before and oppressive rulers, performance of Hajj (by women), placing one at the service of his parents, among others. In another dimension, the prophet (S.A.W) was quoted as saying during his last pilgrimage to Makkah but, “should I inform you of the Mu’min (true believer) is? It is he from whom people are secure with regard to their wealth and their own selves. The true (Muslim) is he from whom people are safe from (being harmed by) his tongue and hand. The true *Mujahid* is he who performs *Jihad al-Nafs* (struggle with the self) in the obedience to Allah”.

There are many verses of the Qur’an that enjoins Muslim Faithfuls to embark on Jihad for instance, the Qur’an (2:190) states that “fight (*qatilu* in Arabic) in the cause of Allah those who fight you (*Yuqatiluna*) but do not commit aggression for Allah loves not the aggressor”. The Qur’an also specified conditions under which an armed struggle could be resorted to such as prevention of imminent attack against Muslims, self defence, against oppression or tyranny, as well as the freedom to practice ones religion.

Hassan al-Bamna (2006:153) also stated that Jihad is a religious duty obligatory on Muslims. Allah has “rendered it (*Jihad*) a supreme object of desire and has made the reward of matyrs and fighters in his way a splendid one for the has conjoined with them in their reward only those who have acted as they did and have modeled themselves upon them in their performance of Jihad” (Al-Banna 2006:153). The import of this statement is that Jihad is not a voluntary or discretionary act on the part

of the believer but an obligation thrust on all Muslim faith fulls by their Creators. Scholars have, however, sought to emphasize. The imperatives of purity of methods to be used in the execution *Jihad* and in this context the position of scholars is that since *Jihad* was a noble goal, the means to be employed for achieving must, as a matter of religious duty, be the most excellent and devoid of breaches of the limits set by Allah (SWT).

In what may be interpreted as a clear warning to those professing to execute *Jihad* Allah has said that, “Do not instigate hostilities for Allah loves not those who instigate hostilities” (2:190). Allah has also enjoined faithful’s on the need for just treatment of people in the course of Jihad. The Qur’an (5:2) states that “let not the hatred of a people (unbelievers) lead you into treating them unjustly. Be just. It is closer to piety”. The Prophet SAW has also been cited in many reported hadith where he enjoined Jihadists to avoid indulging in excesses such as engaging in wanton destruction and the killing of non — combatants or the vulnerable such as women, children, the aged or even innocent people.

It must be stated, however that, its peaceful dimension notwithstanding, *Jihad* has, in contemporary times, been perceived of mainly as an armed struggle in which all methods, violent and peaceful are brought into play. Apparently disputing this suggestion, some Muslim Scholars/have made useful contributions on issues of moderation and extremism as factors in the prosecution of *Jihad* and, indeed, practice of Islamic religious obligations.

Yusuf Al-Qardawi (ed Ali and Wasfy 1991:21) examined the concept of religious extremism, its manifestations, causes and consequences and remedies to the phenomena. Extremism was defined as “being situated at the furthest possible point” from the Centre of an ideological spectrum. Qardawi (1991; 21-27) cited various verses of the Qur’an and hadith to establish the argument that Islam recommends moderation and balance in every activity including the prosecution of *Jihad*. Extremism manifests in different forms such bigotry, disregard of other people’s opinion and prejudice as well as rigidity which deprives the extremist of clarity of vision.

The causes of extremism are multi-dimensional and complex, ranging from Psychological to Sociological, Economic, and religious or a combination of all of these. Qardawi (1991:50) however situated the phenomena of religious extremism to lack of sufficient knowledge and insight into the purposes, letter, spirit and essence of the religion itself, “it (extremism) relies, however on semi knowledge. A person may presume and sometimes genuinely believe-that he knows all there is to know, that he is a scholar, a *faqih*.

But actually he has no more than a hodge podge of undigested and unassimilated “knowledge” which neither enhances insight nor clarifies vision. (Qardawi 1991:50). Apart from less than average knowledge of the religion of Islam, occupation with secondary issues such as growing a beard, Putting on trousers above the ankle or not shaking hands with women; etc. and lastly but not the least, misconceptions of the fundamental principles of the religion of Islam are identified as additional causes of religious extremism. Misconceptions of Islamic Principles have, particularly been

attributed to “linguistic complexities and lack of mastery of Arabic language” which breeds confusion, misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the essence of Qur’anic injunctions or Hadith of the Prophet.

Scholars have examined the various negative manifestations of religious extremism. In contemporary times however, religious, extremism, arising from what is debatably a misconception of the concept of *Jihad* and the codes of conduct for its prosecution has raised fundamental questions about the compatibility of the activities of self-declared Jihad groups like Al-Qaida, Taliban, Islamic State of Iraq and Levantine (ISIL), Al-Shabab and Nigeria’s Boko Haram to Islamic principles. The position of Scholars suggests that the conduct of these movements have more or less earned Islam and Muslims across the World the unfortunate tag of extremism and its twin phenomena, terrorism.

## **ORIGINS OF BOKO HARAM\_**

Like its identity and character, there seems to be some controversy surrounding the exact circumstances, location and date of birth of the *Jama’atu ahius Sunna Ii Da’awati wal Jihad* (Boko Haram).

The emergence of Boko Haram has been attributed to a number of developments in Nigeria’s history, particularly, the imposition of Western culture as a consequence of the colonization of Nigeria by the British. While Western Education was generally accepted in the southern parts, the predominantly Muslim parts of Northern Nigeria accorded it a cold reception. It is important to note here as Salihi (Ed Mohammed 2014:216) and Mohammed (Ed. Haruna 2010: 5) did that the cold reception accorded

to Western Education in Northern Nigeria was not unconnected to the fact that long before the advent of colonialism, Islamic Education in the form Qur'anic schools have existed for centuries in the region, hence the introduction of Western Education (Boko) was seen as a needless invasion on the existing system.

Indeed, given the Christian background of the European colonizers, it was assumed, may be rightly that western education is nothing more than a means for advancing the cause of Christian evangelism. As Abdurrahman and Canham argued, "Nigerian education today, in our opinion is one eyed. This one eye vision was brought to Nigeria by the early Christian missionaries in the middle of the **19th** century. The educational system we have in Nigeria today is basically, the system which these missionaries brought with them". (Ed Mohammed: 2012:216). This perception of western education among Muslims created resentment and disdain in for it and its scholars who are called 'yan Boko.

From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that the term Boko Haram is itself derived from the perception of western education (boko) as something bad, forbidden or *haram* which in Arabic means sinful. Thus the term Boko Haram literally translates into Western Education is sinful (Nwogu 2012:50).

The exact date of the rise of the *Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Ii Da'awati Wa! Jihad* has been a subject of controversy. Some analysts trace the origin of Boko Haram to 1995, first under the leadership of one Abubakar Lawan and later Muhammad Yusuf as well as under different names such as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna wal Jama'a Hijra, Nigerian*



*Taliban*, *Yusufiyya* sect before finally settling for its current name, *Jama'atu ahlissunna li Da'awati wal Jihad*, a.k.a, *Boko Haram* (Nwogu 2012:52).

Without prejudice to the controversy surrounding the exact date of its formation, it is clear that the group rose in stages. In the words of Kyari Tijjani, boko Haram “emerges as an amoebic group, continuously shaping and re-modeling itself to changing local and international environment” (eds Perouse 2014:11).

According to some sources the *Jama'atu Ah!is Sunna Li Da'awati wal Jihad* rose out of the *Yussufiyya* tendency which itself emerged among Muslim scholars that used to converge in Muhammad Indimi's Mosque in Maiduguri the Borno state capital for the Qur'anic exegis (*Tafsir*) conducted under the leadership of the late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam which traditionally holds during the Ramadan fast period. The leader of the *Yusufiyya* sect was Muhammad Yusuf, who was born in Jakusko, Yobe State to Malam Yusuf, himself a Qur'anic teacher who taught the young Muhammad who later rose to become a *Hafiz* (advanced Islamic scholar) after which he established an Islamic centre called *ibn Taymiyya* after the famous 14th century Muslim scholar and reformer. The year 2004, some say 2002, was particularly important in the history of the group, being the date which it set up a Camp in Kanamma Yobe State, along the Nigeria — Niger border, as a place for retreat or plight (*Hejira*). The activities of the group in Kanamama attracted the attention of the security agencies and the attempt to dislodge them led to clashes resulting in casualties on both sides. (ed Mohammed 2012:218). The group later shifted its activities to Maiduguri where it continued its mobilization and recruitment of adherents many of who flocked the sects enclave. There also, their activities attracted the attention of security agencies resulting in

occasional clashes until July 2009 when attempts to dislodge the group from its enclave led to a violent confrontation with security agencies led by the Nigeria Army. At the end of the confrontation, which claimed the lives of over 1000 people, consisting of members of the group, security personnel and innocent civilians, Muhammad Yusuf, the Boko Haram leader was captured by the army and handed over to the Police. However, Muhammad Yusuf was extra judicially killed while in Police custody on July 30, 2009 (ed, Haruna 2010:95) a development that marked the beginning of the insurgency and the campaign of murder and violence that engulfed the North East in particular and Northern Nigeria in general which is yet to be fully overcome by the Nigerian authorities.

## **IDEOLOGY OF BOKO HARAM**

Several paradigms have been used by scholars to explain the Boko Haram insurgency and its objectives. One issue that has however, remained a source of controversy, is the ideological character of the group. And in this context there have been suggestions that Muhammad Yusuf, the slain Boko Haram leader may have been influenced by the teachings of the 14th century Islamic, scholar, Sheik AL-Islam *Ibn Tayyimiya* (Barkindo 2013, Murtada 2013). This suggestion was neither accidental nor wishful thinking but a product of ideas expressed by Muhammad Yusuf himself as well as activities of the group particularly as it related to the goal of establishment of an Islamic State and the methods adopted by Boko Haram for the actualization of this dream. Scholars have tried to emphasize the necessity for a critical examination of the relationship between the teachings of *Ibn Tayyimiya* and the ideologies exposed by contemporary self styled jihadist Movements that have been emerging out of the

Muslim world. The reason for this is that there is, perhaps, no other Islamic theologian, ancient or contemporary, that has had a profound influence than Ibn Tayyimiya and his teachings. Ibn Tamiyya's ideas are premised on the principle that legitimacy of political authority must be based on the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (Sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad SAW. According to *Ibn Taimiyya*, it is obligatory for all adherents to the Islamic faith to ensure that Islamic law is implemented in society. Based on this premise, Islamic theologians, including reformers, revivalists either from the Sufi or Sunni traditions, from the Wahabis to Sayyid Kutb, Osama bin Laden and probably, Muhammad Yusuf of Boko Haram have in one way or the other attacked the validity of secular political authority as well as questioned the authority of Muslim but secular leaders for failing to adhere to the ideas espoused by Ibn Tayyimiya. (Barkindo 2013).

Sheik Al-Islam Ibn Tayyimiya was born in the year 1263 in Harran, an old city that was at that time located in Al-Shams (an old name that represents areas in Modern times called Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon) A Professor of Islamic Law, Ibn Tayyimiya worked in Baghdad (Iraq) and was imprisoned in both Syria and Egypt due to his radical Islamic political ideas. While in jail in Cairo, Egypt, Ibn Tayyimiya wrote his treatise on juridical policy or legitimate political Authority in Islamic Societies. According to him, the legitimacy of political authority must be based on Allah's revelations as contained in the *Qur'an*. "The basic principle of this theory is that human beings must, individually and collectively, surrender all rights of Lordship, legislation and exercise of authority over others. No one should be allowed to pass orders or make commands in his own right except as dictated by Allah (SWT). And no

one ought to accept the obligations to carry out such commands obey orders not made by Allah (SWT). Based on this theory he advocated for a society where the laws of Allah was to be applied (Barkindo 2013) and anyone who subscribes to any political system, rules, makes or obeys laws or judges on the basis of laws not as ordained by Allah is a disbeliever. (Murtada 2013:40) Scholars have attempted to examine the implications of Ibn Tayyimiya's Political Ideology especially in the contemporary era of the 21st centuries. One of these implications is that Tayyimiya's ideology is a negation of the principles of democracy where legitimacy of political authority and sovereignty lies with the people. *Tayyimiya's* ideology also repudiates the right of making laws ascribed to legislatures in modern democracies. For Ibn Tayyimiya, "Allah alone is the real sovereign, all others are his subjects. Allah is the real law giver and absolute legislation rests in him. (Barkindo 2013)".

Precisely, therefore, Ibn Tayyimiya's Islamic Political ideology "completely repudiates the idea of popular sovereignty, a system of governance where the selection of leaders and public officers and the making of laws is entirely left in the hands of the people. He laid claim only to the sovereignty of Allah and his viceroy on earth (leader or Imam) to rule the state based on Allah's laws and practices of the Prophet. (Barkindo 2013).

Going by the stated objective of Boko Haram and the principles that guide the activities of the group as enunciated in views expressed by its leader Muhammad Yusuf in Public lectures of *Tafsirs* (recitation and translations of the Qur'an), studies by scholars have attempted to link the ideology of Boko Haram to the Islamic Political ideology of Ibn Tayyimiya. Whether Boko Haram insurgency represents a correct

understanding of the scholar's teachings and the conditions under which a Jihad can be declared or an Islamic State is to be established is another matter. Though some scholars have argued that information on the ideology of Boko Haram is scanty, it could be stated that Muhammad Yusuf, the leader of the group has outlined his ideas in a publication titled *Hadhahi Aqe datuna wa Manhaf Da'awatuna* (this is our creed and method of our preaching) as well as articulated his thoughts in lectures contained in cassetts and CDs and the internet that are sufficient to provide insights into the group's ideological learning's. (Murtada 2013:15). The Boko Haram ideology rests on the following premises. Affirming *Hikimiyya* for Allah only and that democracy totally conflicts with Islam. Thus Politicians who participate in elections as being *Kufr* (unbelievers) due to their involvement with a system that is unislamic. For them, subscription to man made laws amounts to disbelief (*Kufrun Buwahan*). Accordingly, Muhammad Yusuf justifies *Khuruj* (rebellion whether or not against a Muslim ruler) and cite reported sayings (Hadith) of the prophet to justify their positions. The group further believes that:

- Members of the Movement declared themselves as *Furkhatun — Naji'ah* (saved sect) and are convinced of the legitimacy of their struggle to revive the spirit of Jihad in Nigeria.
- Studies in the prevailing educational system from primary to university level is forbidden for reasons ranging from the colonialist and un Islamic character of Western education, which gradually turns a Muslims into an unbeliever, co-education (*Ikhtilat*) and *Tabarru* (wearing impermissible or

revealing dresses, to the teaching of ideas such as the Darwinian theory of evolution which negates the Islamic views on human creation by Allah.

- Rejection of employment under the democratic government existing in Nigeria in any capacity as doing so amounts to obedience to a system led by unbelievers which negates Allah's (SWT) sayings in the Qur'an (Hud (11:113) that, "And do not incline towards those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the fire, and you would not have, other than Allah, any protectors; then you would not be helped. (Murtada 2013:18).

More importantly, Muhammad Yusuf, the Boko Haram leader rejected the authority of the Nigerian state since, in his view, the state is controlled by a government that is *Kufr* (disbelievers). Supporting his position on ungodly rulers as contained in Qur'an 2:257 and 4:51), Yusuf contended that it is an obligation on every Muslim to disobey ungodly (non-Islamic) governments and replace them with Islamic States. And based on these and other beliefs, the Boko Haram leader prepared himself and his group for an eventual confrontation with the Nigerian security leading to his violent death and the insurgent activities his followers engaged in under the leadership of his successor, Abubakar Shekau. Muhammad Yusuf's ideas and practices of his group have been the target of severe criticism by both Islamic and non-Islamic scholars. Among the Boko Harams foremost critics is Sheikh Ja'afar Adam, an Islamic scholar who was contemporary of Muhammad in their of membership of various Islamic study groups. Educated at an Islamic University in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, Adam had articulated positions that tend to debunk the assumptions that informed the Boko Haram leaders

position on issues such as Western education. Sheikh Adam specifically contradicted Yusuf's views by stating that receiving modern secular (western) education or working for a non-Islamic government are not *haram* (forbidden under Islamic law) but lawful. Adam described Yusuf's arguments on these issues as "a catastrophe, pure ignorance, not based on any knowledge and without link to the Qur'an or Hadith" (Brill 2012). Sheikh Adam rationalized his arguments on two Islamic doctrines i.e doctrine of necessity (*darura*) and Muslims collective interest (*Maslaha*). On the doctrine of necessity, Adam's assumptions were that since Muslims do not have sufficient schools to cater for their educational needs, they have no option but to attend government owned schools that are mostly co-educational (where boys and girls mingled freely) Adam further argued that it was necessary for Muslims to acquire western secular education such as medicine, engineering, economics, education etc to be in a position to cope with challenges of life. He cited personalities like Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-zawahiri and Abu Musab al-zarqawi as examples of Muslims who have acquired western education and employed it to counter the machinations of western powers. Sheikh Adam also used the doctrine of necessity to rationalize working for the Nigerian State to, in his views, defend and promote the interest of their fellow Muslims. In the circumstance of the existence under the Nigerian State, the choice for Muslims is between taking up government employment to protect their fellow Muslims from harm or refuse to work for government thereby allowing non-Muslims to monopolize the machinery of state to the disadvantage of Muslims. Above all, Sheikh Adam disagreed with Mohammad Yusuf, the Boko Haram leader on the desirability for an armed struggle to replace the Nigerian state with an Islamic State

though he (Adam) agreed that there is the need for the establishment of an Islamic State (Brill 2012). It is clear that both Sheikh Adam and Yusuf share the passion for establishing an Islamic state but differ on the method for achieving the objective.

Apart from Sheikh Adam, other Islamic and secular scholars have expressed reservations against the positions of Muhammad Yusuf on western education or the establishment of an Islamic state in accordance with Ibn Taymiyya's ideas in the current era of "modernity and democratic civilization and the acceptance even among new generation of Muslims, of democracy, as a factor in the improvement of the standard of living of all human beings irrespective of religion, cultural or other difference (Barkindo 2013). The resort to threats to violence and engagement in violent activities in the pursuit of its goals have also attracted the characterization of Boko Haram as the *Khawarij* of Nigeria in reference to an earlier Islamic rejectionist group that engaged in similar activities shortly after the death of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Indeed, the resort to violence and terrorism by Boko Haram is said to demonstrate not only 'their deviation from Allah's book (Qur'an) and the sunnah of the prophet but also their sheer ignorance of how Islam is spread (Murtada 2013: 12). The ideology and practices of Boko Haram have indeed been sources of controversy all of which creates further complications in establishing a correct identity of the group, their real objectives and the validity of their ideological claims.

## **RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR CONDUCTING A JIHAD**

The Holy Qur'an contains many verses that enjoin Muslim faithful to embark on a Jihad (hold wazi). For instance, the Qur'an (2:190) states that, "Fight (Qatilu) in the



cause of Allah, those who fight you (Yuqatiluna) but do not commit oppression for Allah loves not the aggressor”. Similarly, the Qur’an (22:39) states that “Permission is given to those who fight (Yuqatiluna) because they have been oppressed.... For had it not been for Allah’s repelling, some men by means of others (all) monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosque where in the names of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down”. In the same vein, the Qur’an (2:193) provides that “And fight them (Qatiluhum) until there is no fitna (oppression) and religion in for Allah.

The Qur’an also specified conditions that necessitate the declaration of a Jihad; these include to prevent imminent attack on Muslims, in defense of self and others, against oppression and tyranny or for the purpose of removing oppressive laws. These conditions alone does not justify the declaration of Jihad until all avenues for reconciliation have been exhausted and there are no realistic alternative to fighting as stated by the Da’awa Institute of Nigeria (2009:13).

The Qur’an has also set forth rules of engagement for the conduct of Jihad when it becomes inevitable.

A very important starting point of the rules of engagement about the declaration and execution of Jihad is that it is not waged primarily for the purpose of either the conversion of non-believers into Islam nor is it a war against non-Muslims but a fight for self-defence i.e when attacked by an enemy. Indeed, the Qur’an (2:256) explicitly stated that “Let there be no compulsion in religion. In the same vein, the Qur’an

(16:125) stated that “invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching NOT BY FORCE OF ARMS (emphasis) mine.

Where a violent war becomes necessary, the Qur’an has also stated the code for its conduct. For instance, the Qur’an (2:193) enjoined Muslims thus, “And fight them (Qatiluhum) until there is no fitna (oppression ... but if they cease let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

Furthermore, if the aggressors incline towards peace, Muslims should incline towards it (Qur’an 2:193). Muslim are also forbidden from aggression or initiation of violence of any kind. For as the Qur’an (2:190) stated “God does not love aggressors. Additionally, Islamic forbids attacking non-combatants or vulnerable people like women, children, aged people etc. in one of his traditions reported by Malik, Prophet Muhammad said, “Never kill women, children and the old weakened of aged”. Indeed, elsewhere, the Qur’an (2:190) stated that “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not go beyond the limits (to instigate aggression). Against the background of the codes of conduct or rules of engagement for declaring or executing a Jihad the question that this study seeks to answer is; to what extent are the declaration of Jihad, employment of the strategy of armed struggle or the killing of non combatants such as women, children, the aged and other vulnerable persons by Boko Haram?. How justified is Boko Haram planting of bombs and other explosive devices or murder of people in Mosques, churches, schools or market places or kidnapping of school children from the prospective of the rules of engagement for conducting a Jihad set by the Qur’an and traditions of Prophet Muhammad?. The above mentioned rules of engagement for Jihad would constitute the basis of this study aimed at establishing the

extent to which Boko Haram's declaration of Jihad or its execution conform to Islamic principles.

### **BOKO HARAM FUNDAMENTALISM OR TERRORISM?**

In the preceding part of this paper, attempts have been made to examine the origins, rise, ideology and methodology of *Jama'atul Ahiul Sunna Li Da'awati Wa! Jihad* (aka Boko Haram). In the same vein and attempts has been made to conceptualize the Boko Haram phenomena within a defined theoretical frame work. The position of this paper is that the failed state thesis sufficiently captures the circumstances that may have given rise to Boko Haram. It is a fact that the situation in Nigeria between 2009 and 2015 reflect conditions that are similar to a state heading to failure. The fact that the situation in Nigeria during above period was marked by failure, inability or unwillingness on the part of the government to address group grievances leading to insurgent activities by movements such as Boko Haram and Niger Delta Militants, lack of political legitimacy of the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), the loss of state monopoly of the use of force and loss of control of territory, it could be argued that Nigeria was actually heading towards (becoming a failed state). Such a situation is capable breeding agitations, violence and the rise of ethno-religious militia such as Boko haram. The next issue of importance as far as this paper is concerned is whether Boko Haram can be correctly perceived as an Islamic movement. Going by the group's romance with Ibn Taymiyya's ideology of the desirability for the creation of an Islamic state, one is tempted to categorize Boko Haram as an Islamic movement. However, Mohammed Yusuf, the Boko Haram Leaders revisionist tendencies as shown by characterization of western education or working for an unIslamic

government as sinful raise fundamental questions about the compatibility of Boko Haram ideas with the Islamic faith. However, in examining the ideology of the group, it is important to acknowledge the reservations expressed by Islamic scholars on the authenticity or correctness of the path taken by the leadership in the context of standards laid down by Islam as guide for conduct of movements such as Boko Haram. The view of prominent Islamic scholars such as the late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmood Adam and Sheikh Mohammed Auwal Albani suggest that though Boko Haram has the semblance of an Islamic movement, fundamental questions surround the quality and ideological disposition and methodology of the leadership. "For instance, Sheikh Ja'far and Albani of Zaria were critical of Muhammad Yusuurs understanding of the circumstance and intents of Islamic reform. They have separately argued, in widely circulated recordings of their interactions with the group's leader, that he lacked good understanding of the issues at stake, and they advised him against the course of action he was taking as well as the need for him to recant his position among his followers. (Ed. Mohammed 2012:219). Sheikh Albani had, before his brutal murder in Zaria also made critical comments on the credibility of the Boko Haram leaders' ideological dispositions. Infact Muhammad Yusuf was Sheikh Albany's student before the former broke away.

The Sheikh was quoted as accusing the Boko Haram leader of dabbling into issues he knew little about in apparent reference to Mohammed Yusuf's assertions on the incompatibility between science and Islam and his declaration of Western education as sinful which Sheikh Albani and Ja'afar described as not entirely correct. In the name vein, Mohammed Yusuf, the Boko Haram's luxurious life style (he was believed to

own about 20 SUV Jeeps) while his followers survived on dates and fruits, his alleged receipt of funds from foreign groups have fueled claims of conducts that are described as a negation of Islamic principles by the slain Boko Haram readers.

If the identity or credentials of Boko Haram leaders has been questioned on the grounds of the incompatibility of their ideas to Islam, their operations such as the declaration of an open challenge to the Nigerian state and its resort to armed struggle and other violent activities are no less controversial. From 2009 to date, Boko Haram has been allegedly involved in numerous attacks against individuals, groups and state institutions. For example, on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009, the group had a violent clash with security agencies in Bauchi where two policemen were killed. Barely 3 days after the group invaded police station in Potiskum, Yobe state where a number of policemen were killed. 2 days after, i.e July 29, 2009 Boko Haram had another confrontation with security agents at Mamudo where 33 members of the group were killed. In January 2011, the group allegedly assassinated an ANPP gubernatorial candidate in Maiduguri Borno State. Indeed from 2009 to date, Boko Haram has been linked to numerous acts of violence in various parts of Northern Nigeria such as Kano, Kaduna, Niger including Abuja where the United Nations office and Police headquarters were not spared with high casualties. Boko Haram has also kidnapped hundreds of school children such as in Chibok and Dapchi in Yobe state or attacked and killed many school children as in Buni Yadi also in Yobe state. At the height of its campaign of violence, Boko Haram has even succeeded in capturing and controlling dozens of Local Government Areas of Borno and Adamawa states where hundreds of civilians were killed or abducted. Not to be easily forgotten is the practice of using women and

underaged children as suicide bombers which has claimed the lives of hundreds of people in Maiduguri, Damaturu, Yobe, Konduga and other parts of Yobe, Borno states and Nigeria in general.

Precisely, therefore, Boko Haram has engaged in violence and other deadly activities that have claimed the lives of thousands, perhaps, hundreds and thousands of innocent lives as well as caused the displacement of over 2 million people (According to UN estimates) from the affected states many of who were accommodated in camps across various northern states of Nigeria.

The resort to armed struggle and the orgy of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram in various parts of Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon have raised fundamental questions about the compatibility of the group's activities with Islamic rules of engagement for conducting a Jihad, assuming it is desirable in Nigeria of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These acts of violence, particularly attacks against non-combatants such as school children, worshippers, women, children and other vulnerable people have earned Boko Haram the tag of terrorists.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In the preceding analysis, this paper has attempted to critically examine the Boko Haram insurgency with the aim of determining whether it is an Islamic fundamentalist or a terrorist movement in the context of which the history, origins, ideology and operations of Boko Haram were examined. The position of this paper is that going by its breach of the rule of engagement of conducting a Jihad, Boko Haram is anything but an Islamic fundamentalist movement. At best Boko Haram is an organized group

of economically marginalized people using ill digested Islamic ideas as a platform for seeking redress in the system. In the opinion of this paper, Boko Haram qualifies to be branded as a terrorist group going by the definition of what constitutes a terrorist group, i.e the use of violence against soft targets to influence decision of political leaders for the achievement of its objectives. Given the specter of violent aimed struggle, suicide bombings using women and children, abduction of school children, bombing of places of worship, schools, markets and other soft targets or non-combatants, Boko Haram qualifies to be described as a terrorist group.

In the same vein, the result of a questionnaire and interviews conducted as part of research project for my Ph.D programme in Political Science, majority of the respondents opined, among others that, the conditions for executing a Jihad do not exist in Nigeria. Similarly, the respondents believe that the employment of violent armed struggle by Boko Haram was unnecessary and unjustified. In the same vein, majority of the respondents were of the view that Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria was borne out of the misinterpretation of the concept of Jihad. On the question of the identity of Boko Haram, however there seems to be lack of consensus among muslim scholars on whether Boko Haram is merely a terrorist group or an Islamic fundamentalist movement genuinely committed to the execution of the process of Islamic transformation in Nigeria. Some respondents to the interview were of the view that Boko Haram is a group which sprang up as a consequence of the deepening economic, social and political crisis that Nigeria has been expressing in the past few decades. It is this crises that has given rise to violent ethno religion and communal groups such as Boko Haram, MEND, OPC, IPOB, MASSOB and other extremist

groups. As the Nigerian government and other stakeholders explore ways of ending the Boko Haram insurgency this paper recommends the following;

1. The Nigerian Government should address problems of economic marginalization. In a country where economic mismanagement, stealing of public funds and corruption are endemic, groups such as Boko Haram would have a fertile ground to grow. This Nigerian government should address the problem of poverty and unequal distribution of national wealth to stem the growth of economically marginalized people many of who are potential insurgents.
2. Religious and community leaders need to check the radicalization and misinterpretation of religion ideas especially among Muslims. It is worrisome that every half educated Islamic scholar considers himself as a public preacher, surviving on opinionated interpretation of the Qur'an. This breeds the rise of misguided and extremist elements that establish groups such as Boko Haram.
3. Government should increase the level of democratization to raise the level of popular participation in the decision making
4. Government should continue with its counter insurgency operations to deal with terrorists and other criminals, the survival of the Nigerian state. This calls for increased funding to the military and other security agencies.

With these and other proactive measures, the chances of groups such as Boko Haram emerging to hold the country to ransom would be reduced if not totally eliminated.



On the whole, however, the Nigerian government needs to wake up to defeat Boko haram insurgents if peace and security is to be restored in the North east region. Almost a decade since the outbreak of the insurgency in 2009, a significant part of Borno and Adamawa states are still no-go area even for the military let alone unarmed civilians. It is therefore imperative for the Nigerian state to redouble its efforts at ending the Boko Haram insurgency.

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